United Nations E/AC.51/2002/L.6/Add.32

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
18 June 2002

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Forty-second session
10 June-5 July 2002
Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-second session

Draft report

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Addendum

Report(s) of the Joint Inspection Unit

(*Item 6*)

Strengthening the investigations function in United Nations system organizations

1. At its 6th meeting, on 12 June 2002, the Committee considered the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, entitled "Strengthening the investigations function in United Nations system organizations" (A/56/282), and the comments of the Secretary-General, as well as those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination thereon (A/56/282/Add.1). The report of the Joint Inspection Unit was introduced by Inspector Khalil Issa Othman.

Discussion

2. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit was appreciated. Views were expressed that the report dealt with a very important component of oversight namely that of investigation, and that it built upon previous Joint Inspection Unit reports on oversight. It was considered that the report was informative, timely and topical and its specific recommendations helpful to the Member States and the secretariats of the United Nations system organizations.

3. There was general endorsement of its recommendations on their own merit and taking into account the information given on endorsement by other governing bodies of United Nations system organizations of those recommendations.

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4. Views were also expressed that a number of the comments of the Secretary-General on the report, and especially on specific recommendations should be considered.

5. The view was expressed that the report would have been more useful to Member States had it provided more analysis of the situation in different organizations.

6. Views were expressed that the report could have also been more beneficial had the views of the different organizations on different issues been more specific.

7. There was general agreement on having recognized common standards and procedures for investigations, especially in view of the conclusions of and adoption by the Third Conference of International Investigators of United Nations Organization and Multilateral Financial Investigations (7-8 March 2002, Washington, D.C.) of a "Uniform Standards for Investigations".

8. Views were expressed that the standards and procedures may be further adapted to the circumstance of each organization.

9. Views were also expressed that the comments of the Secretary-General on this issue, especially the legal implications, should be considered.

10. On the issue of training of managers, questions were raised as to the desirability of involving managers in investigation. Views were expressed that it was better to leave that function to qualified investigators. Other views expressed were along the lines of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, namely, that since managers do carry out investigations in the absence of qualified investigators, there was a need for training managers in recognized standards and procedures in order to minimize the risks to the investigative process.

11. There was general agreement on the need for a professional investigations capability in each organization and that a risk profile and analysis be undertaken by Executive Heads of each organization for subsequent consideration by their respective legislative bodies.

12. Views were expressed on options for financing access of small organizations to professional investigations capability and that such options and others be also considered in conjunction with the Office of Internal Oversight Services review being presently carried out on the subject.

13. General agreement was voiced on the issue of organizations adopting preventive measures based on proactive investigations and lessons learned from completed investigations. Views were expressed that proactive investigations were considered to be topical issues for the future.

14. Questions were raised about the distinction between the functions of investigation and inspection; and between investigators and auditors. Reference was made to such a distinction including references to such discussion in the Joint Inspection Unit report.

15. Although not included in the report, a question was raised as to the efficacy of having "resident investigators" in major peacekeeping or humanitarian missions.

16. Concerns were raised about the time lapse between the issuance of the Joint Inspection Unit report and of the comments of the Secretary-General thereon.

17. Views were expressed regarding the desirability of having the comments of the different organizations on the substance and recommendations included in the Joint Inspection Unit reports. It was noted that such views were being favourably considered by the Unit. A number of Joint Inspection Unit reports included such information, but it remained to become more standardized.

Conclusions and recommendations

18. **The Committee welcomed the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on strengthening the investigations function in the United Nations system organizations (A/56/282) and found it informative, timely and useful.**

19. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6, as contained in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit.**

20. **The Committee also recommended approval of recommendation 2 on training managers who are already involved in investigative activities, owing to the absence of qualified and experienced investigators on established standards and procedures of investigations, with the understanding that caution will be exercised to ensure that the managers' independence and impartiality in their areas of responsibility is guaranteed, and that clear guidelines spelling out the extent of their involvement at all stages of the investigations process will be provided.**